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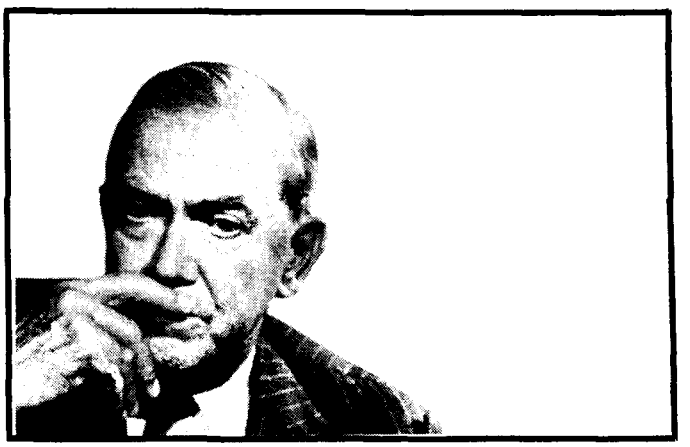
DANIEL ELLSBERG AND THE NEW HEROISM

THE REBELLION OF ACCOMPLICES

TODD GITLIN

Graham Greene



ON BECOMING A CATHOLIC

BEGINNING THE AFFAIR

RUSSELL W. GIBBONS **THAW BEFORE THE FREEZE**

CHRISTOPHER NORWOOD **SOUTHERN STAMP STRATEGY**

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR. **FEIFFER'S FUNNIES**

JAMES FINN **CATHOLIC REVOLUTIONARIES**

PETER STEINFELS **JACKSON AND THE BIG LIE**

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NEWS & VIEWS

The Danbury Strikes

Friends of the Berrigans regret that one crucial detail of the prison strikes at Danbury relating to the failure to extend parole to Dan and Phil was not more strongly stressed by the media; namely, the target of the work strike.

The target was not the prison's large glove industry, but rather the prison's electronics plant, *which specializes in electric cables for missiles.*

The electronics plant is part of the Federal Prison Industries work set-up, and is no mere rehabilitation operation in which prisoners make their 17¢ to 46¢ per hour and earn "extra good time" toward early release from prison.

It's big business as well as controversial rehabilitation.

According to the Bureau of Prisons' basic data book, 65 prisoners and 10 civilian personnel produced at Danbury in fiscal '68 electronic goods valued at $1,151,204, profit earnings on which were $428,519.

Danbury prison's electronics industry agitates sensitive inmates in several ways. To begin with, it co-opts many into laboring for a militarist system which they abhor, and opposition to which had landed some of the strikers in prison. Also, the profits from their labor go into the General Treasury, there to be used for anything, even support of the war. These profits are not, as many think they should be, specifically earmarked for correctional and rehabilitation purposes.

The prison's electronics industry thus provided a natural and morally defendable target for the prison strikers.

In this context, not a few people believe that not just Danbury but the whole Federal Prison Industries business deserves a hard, critical look, both as questionable therapy and for the flagrant manner in which it exploits prison labor. Indeed, some view the Federal Prison Industries system as a kind of latter-day slave operation.

In 1970, Federal Prison Industries netted $58,355,621 in sales—figures from the annual report of the U.S. Attorney General. Five-million of this went into the General Treasury, bringing to $82 million the amount deposited there since 1946 by FPI.

Federal Prison Industries was incorporated in 1930, and is supervised by a board of directors, which includes —naturally—a representative of the Defense Department; it is convenient to know always what the Pentagon needs.

But the board also includes the head of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, and to many that is surprising. For it places labor's top official in the dubious role of aiding and abetting competition which is not only non-union, but also (if you credit the harsh critics) slave.

Church and Youth

The Isle of Wight forms a part of the Diocese of Portsmouth, England, and is administered by Bishop Derek Worlock, a former secretary of Cardinals Griffin, Godfrey and Heenan, and "a convert of the Council."

Last summer, Bishop Worlock dispatched a team of spiritual counselors to the mammoth rock festival held on the Isle of Wight, and went there himself to observe the happening. He has been much criticized since for this action.

In its current issue, *Informations Catholiques Internationales* of Paris inquires of Bishop Worlock if he regrets his gesture:

"Absolutely not. Of course there was much discussion of that experience and the press called me 'the pop bishop,' which was pretty ridiculous. It is nevertheless essential that the church be present at such gatherings of youth, because for many young people these meetings play an important role for their future; they can be the occasion for vigorous Christian brotherhood, or, to the contrary, for an acceptance of what is called 'the permissive society.'

"Present-day youth is often not at ease in our society and feels the need to organize its own celebrations. The young gather not only to listen to 'pop music'—which is often only a noise in the background—but also to feel at ease, to live in solidarity and share in all sorts of common needs. The generations change every five years, and each time the church must show it belongs to the new generation, and also understands it.

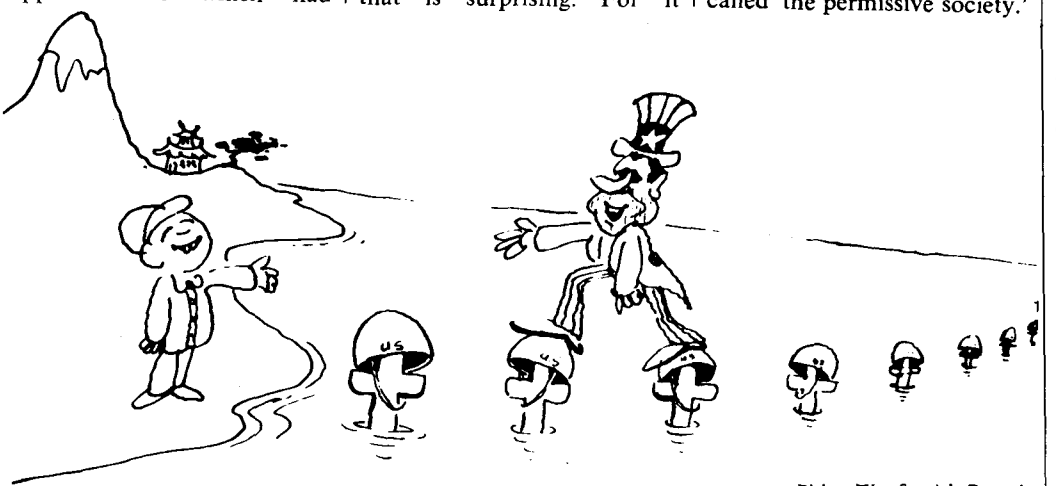
"That is why, avoiding all paternalism, the church must bear witness from within in spite of every difficulty and the misunderstandings that ensue. If Christ lived on earth today, he would march along with the young. He 'had pity for the multitudes.' And this is a question of a multitude, not a gathering of 'freaks.'"

Bishop Worlock said another team of priests, monks and nuns would attend a similar festival this year, not to "promote" it, "but to be present there, discreetly to be of service to the young." He added: "I will go there again myself for I believe that this is part of a bishop's 'prophetic' role—not in an egotistic or triumphalist sense—but simply to bear witness to Christ."

Odds and Ends

—Things you'd never know unless you read the Catholic press: another Catholic organization has dropped the denominational designation from its title; the American Catholic Sociological Society is now the Association for the Sociology of Religion.

—Things you'd never know unless you read the sports page: when Ewing Kauffman, owner of the Kansas City Royals, dedicated his Florida baseball academy, there was a message from President Nixon; when Satchel Paige was inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame, there was a telegram from Herbert Klein. JOHN DEEDY



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CORRESPONDENCE

Some cum laude

Lisle, Ill.

To the Editors: Seeing the Modernist crisis in terms of "good guys" vs. "bad guys" makes a book review easier to write but clouds the deeper issues of that period. Maryellen Muckenhirn's characterizations (in her review of Reardon's *Roman Catholic Modernism*, June 11) of the Romans as merely "the oldest and tightest bureaucracy in the world" and "repressive authority" and of the Modernists as "modernizing intellectuals" and reformers are distorting. True, the papal rhetoric and tactics were less than Christian but the firmness of papal opposition to Modernist thought cannot be faulted. Loisy (wittingly) and Tyrrell (unwittingly) had made revelation a meaningless term in the world of 1907. If creativity is defined as the ability to put forth revolutionary ideas without even being aware of their philosophical and theological implications (cf. especially Loisy's response to Lamentabili and Pascendi, his *Simples Réflexions*), then I suppose "creative" accurately describes their thought. Yet I still wonder how Miss Muckenhirn would concretize her propositions that the Modernists "did contribute in some way to the ongoing religious experience of the human family" and that "their thought and life are somehow a contribution to their fellow men." *Some* is a word that gets one off the hook too easily in this case.

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Archie in Suburbia

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To the Editors: In his correspondence of June 11, Mr. Bresnahan seems to equate suburban with liberal. But the blue-collar ethnic as much as anyone has "been seduced by the American dream of a home of his own with a lawn, etc., etc., etc." Or who was it

(Continued on page 463)

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Front cover photo of Graham Greene: Karsh, Ottawa. Drawing on page 447: left, Dunnett, Canada; right Vadillo, Mexico.

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OUT IN THE FREEZE

Liberals are going to learn that the most dangerous thing about giving out advice to Mr. Nixon is that the President may accept it. For over two years, while the economy kept oozing through the Administration's grasp, Democrats and labor repeatedly urged the President to "do something," the something most frequently mentioned being wage-price controls. Well, the President did something; and wage-price controls (or rather a freeze) it is—along with devaluation, a new tariff, and tax cuts. Yet liberals and labor are still unhappy, even more than they were after the President took their advice on China. Are they simply inveterate grumblers? Or crying sour grapes because they see the economy issue, like the peace issue in regard to China, fading from their Presidential campaign plans?

It is true that Presidential critics, in the face of what seemed almost total refusal to consider firm government intervention, put more stress on simply taking action than what precisely that action should be. Of course, taking any action was surely to have at least a short-run positive effect on an economy desperate for direction rather than drift. But the Administration's critics have never been simply interested in an abstract "economy" but in the groups of Americans whose tenuous hold on well-being was being broken by the shut-out of the Nixon game plan as well as those whose already scandalous deprivation was being deepened. These are the very groups, it seems, that have been chosen to carry the burden of the President's New Economic Policy, with its asymmetric limits on wage-earners and businesses; its investment tax-credit bonanza for business, suitably termed from the Orwellian dictionary a "job development credit"; its postponement of welfare reform at a time when repressive measures toward welfare clients are multiplying; its ten percent slash in foreign aid. The economy may improve, but it will be organized workers who have yet to catch up on the cost-of-living ladder, unorganized workers, government employees, and the poor at home and abroad who will pay the price.

That is the primary objection to the new policy. There are others. First, its somewhat slipshod construction: *The Economist,* while generally welcoming the possibilities Mr. Nixon has opened, described the wage-price freeze as "the clumsiest possible device of a total but far too short-term freeze, in an electorally-motivated package largely thought up by a handful of men in a single weekend, on the eve of an election year into which any

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extension of the freeze would become politically unpopular, under the management of a Texas politician who has been an outspoken scoffer at incomes policy in the past and who himself probably has vice-presidential aspirations." Second, the decision-making process revealed: there was a Gaullist decisiveness in Nixon's solution to a problem de Gaulle himself had long ago warned of, and a case can be made for secrecy and suddenness in the circumstances; but the dramatic, *fait accompli* character of the gesture—also Gaullist—follows the pattern of past Nixon moves and indicates a preference which is more than pragmatic, and which is worrisome to those who feel that political participation is a central value. Third, the nationalist undertone: the responsibility of the U.S. for its economic predicament was slighted for charges against "international money speculators" and "unfair . . . foreign competition"; the new surcharge is, strictly speaking, illegal under the international tariff agreement; the crucial question of our relationship with Japan appears destined to be settled by the account books—all of which implies an isolationism as serious as any Mr. Nixon has conjured in defending the war in Vietnam.

None of these objections is absolutely conclusive for the simple reason that neither is Mr. Nixon's policy. Ninety days is not long; Congress will soon be in session. To call the Nixon plan "his domestic journey to Peking" is apt in the sense that what has occurred so far is mainly a commitment; the real journey is yet to come. Mr. Nixon has indicated which way he wants to travel, but if liberal and labor forces unite to insist on the hazards of that route while suggesting another, the President may yet find he has started on a trip he did not quite anticipate. The first voices to point out the defects of the New Economic Policy, interestingly enough, were Mr. Meany and Senator McGovern, not the closest of companions in recent politics. Is it an augury of things to come?

Steel: The Thaw Before the Freeze

If political history is stranger than fiction, then it should not have been with complete surprise that it would be Richard Nixon and a cortege of Wall Street lawyers and Texas oilmen who would usher in a planned economy in the United States. Not in their wildest days did the Keynesians from Harvard envision an Office of Economic Preparedness, which would by Presidential fiat freeze wages and prices, while at the same time affording incentives to the owners and lenders of capital, and even questioning the right to strike. Cynics are prepared to dismiss it as political Nixonomics for 1972, a dramatic effort to stimulate the economy and take the heat off the Administration in a Presidential election year. Yet, one of the casualties of the freeze, regardless of its temporary or extended life, may be traditional union-management negotiations. What happened in labor during the month preceeding Nixon's economic gamble thus becomes more than just history. It may have been the final throes of Wagner-era collective bargaining in the United States.

If this is the final throes, then the last vibrant expression of labor-management negotiations may have been the recent steel settlement agreed on in the luxury apartment suites across the street from the cavernous Washington Shoreham Hotel: there, only hours before the expiration date of an industry-wide contract which involved the largest single number of American workers, a onetime molder from Magnolia, Ohio, was asked into a private room by a $225,000-a-year vice-president of U.S. Steel.

They both fit all the stereotypes in the bag of clichés which came with significant labor negotiating in a year when collective bargaining was also being battered by the storms of "relevance." Richard Nixon emptied out the bag when he invited both to the White House in early July, urging them to conduct their affairs in the spirit of "hard bargaining." His position was crystal clear in an earlier Council of Economic Advisors report: "our steel industry's competitive position is significantly eroded through large increases in wage costs"—suave Nixonese for pay restraints during galloping inflation.

All this submerged with the cold realities of July 31. The corporation man, Ralph Heath Larry, had to report to a Big Steel presidium of nine executives of the nation's top steel producers that their waiting game had run out and that Nixon's man was in the wings concerned, even uptight. Larry's antagonist, a Welshman by the name of Iorwith Wilbur Abel, had told him that he was going to walk back across the street and tell some 600 unhappy local union presidents, who held the strike proxies for upwards of half a million steelworkers, that their employers were bargaining in less than good faith.

Nixon's man almost choked on his pipe when Abel showed no interest in extending the contract expiration and continuing talks in the White House, knowing that in the hotel were clusters of union leaders from the mills who had been chafing after weeks of frustrating and seemingly endless committee meetings with company lawyers and executives. The mood was against any extension, and in steel towns in a dozen states in the Northeast and Midwest cadres were already drinking in plant-gate taverns, strike signs stacked in a corner. There was little "militancy" rhetoric, only the resolution that is present with the desperate recognition there is no place to go but up.

In the end the "rugged-looking, white-haired labor leader" with the grandfatherly appearance turned a hotel ballroom full of angry local union leaders around and afforded the corporation lawyers another 24 hours to

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agree to that which most knowledgeable industry-watchers knew must come with or without a strike. "It was Abel's finest hour," said one union politician, who had predicted that plant-level frustrations would be a seedbed watered by an industry strike which would grow into a full-blown insurgency against him when the 1.2-million-member union holds elections in 1973.

Yet by two declarations did Abel weld an eleventh-hour unity against the mounting evidence that the industry was willing to endure a strike: he brought both militants and moderates in the President's conference to their feet with the assertion that he would not bargain in the White House, and perhaps more important in 1971, reminded them that "the company is your enemy." Despite the caucuses of militant-talking presidents, there was little "strike fever" in the mill towns, where workers riding the inflation treadmill with little more than a BankAmericard in the pocket wanted only to win at the blue-collar game of "catch up," which had been successfully played by those in auto, transportation and the other metals industries over the past year. The steel owners decided to hold off on putting any money on the table until some 48 hours before the contract expired, and then welshed on verbal agreements to respond to changes in language and fringes.

How much actual internal jawboning went on from the Nixon Administration and their mediators and the Big Steel men may be left for conjecture in the corporate corridors; there is little doubt, however, that if the steel men felt secure in the stockpile built up in anticipation of a shutdown, there was widespread uneasiness among the Nixon economic game-planners. John Connally reportedly told Nixon that even if the industry could take a strike well into fall, the political readings for 1972 would be aggravated. The steel men who got that word passed it on to Heath Larry, and with only a couple of hours to go to the extended strike deadline he appeared for a joint press conference with Abel to announce a settlement. His three company companions looked as must officials whose presence is requested at public executions. Larry read a statement which said something about "the forces at work" which compelled an "inflationary" settlement, while at the same time United States Steel was effecting the next-day price changes which became the largest single increase in the cost of domestic steel.

The union people knew this, as did those who issue the "inflation alerts" for the President's economic advisors. Those who observed the negotiating process pondered if it were just something called Games Negotiators Play. Many of those involved agreed, and pointed toward new procedures instead of summit competition involving patience, articulation and sometimes just physical endurance. Yet the political ramifications of a nationwide strike in a basic industry on the eve of an election year could not be discounted.

The dilemma in the steel industry reflects the contradictions of the American economy—a surface prosperity of middle-class consciousness and a seemingly unending flow of consumer goods, yet with a seething discontent below of a growing unemployed class. When an industry such as steel cannot pay its average job-class workers the minimum set by the government for moderate living standards, then more than just the industry is in trouble.

What emerged, despite the poor-mouthing of the industry (profits in each steel company have risen from 30 to 50 per cent over the last six years, and labor productivity has gone up an estimated 30 per cent) was a contract which was the best ever negotiated in steel. Yet by Labor Day as many as 50,000 steel workers will still be on layoff, and the long-term reduction in work force is bound to begin. Marginal companies will not sustain the double punch of worker gains and foreign imports, and the urge to merge will continue among the smaller companies. By late August the huge Bethelehem mill in Lackawanna, N.Y., had still not reopened, yet European steel was being unloaded at an adjacent dock for the nearby Ford assembly plant.

The steel industry in this country has preferred high prices and protectionism to competition on the world market. A study prepared for the Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly pointed out that if the domestic producers had worked at capacity and exported its product at world market prices, it could have eliminated the U.S. balance of payments deficit during the Kennedy years. Cheap wages abroad have become an industry strawman, and while they have raised the specter of foreign imports, some of the bigger producers have actually made the initial steps toward building steel mills abroad.

By his August 15 wage-price freeze, Nixon has effectively removed any immediate pay increase for upwards of 100,000 American steelworkers under extended or "me-too" agreements patterned after the August 1 settlement. Also in a limbo are some 150,000 workers in various industries who were on strike when the freeze was ordered and who have been asked to return to work by the Administration's top federal labor mediator. A long, bitter steel strike and its political consequences would have been near-fatal to the Administration game-plan, and would have been chaotic as a backdrop to a wage-price freeze. For Nixon, a non-strike, regardless of the settlement, was for steel and his economic plans peace in our time. For labor, it may become a long-delayed confrontation between economics and patriotism, for ultimately the freeze becomes an appeal to the American worker to shelve his earning power and even to give up his right to strike.

RUSSELL W. GIBBONS

(Russell W. Gibbons is a labor editor, resident in Pittsburgh.)

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JACKSON AND THE BIG LIE

PETER STEINFELS

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON is runnng for President. In other words, this is no time to expect him to be scrupulously respectful of the truth. Especially when faced with the opportunity to win a standing ovation from a state labor convention and the accolade of one union leader as "the answer to the American people's prayers."

But those few of us who plan to be voting, rather than running, for the Presidency ought to nip in the bud a Big Lie campaign device of the same magnitude as Dick Nixon's "Truman-Acheson college of cowardly Communist containment."

"Some people in the Democratic party . . ." Jackson declared several weeks ago, "have turned their backs on the working man." Some people, it seems, have cocktail parties which "abound with snide jokes about 'hard-hats' and 'ethnics.' " The same "some people," he went on, "mouth fashionable clichés about how workers have grown fat and conservative with affluence, and now their unions are reactionary or racist." When Senator Jackson was asked exactly who "some people" were, his forthrightness suddenly failed him: he preferred not to go into personalities. Such restraint is surely more prudent than claiming to have a mysterious list in one's hand, but it amounts to the same thing.

One can always find "some people" especially in an entity as large and amorphous as the Democratic party—who are guilty of anything; but Senator Jackson is clearly not talking about smallfry: these "absolutists on the left" are even threatening to take over the whole party. With the Senator being so sensitive toward personalities, those of us who prefer precision over innuendo will have to make some assumptions. We will have to assume that he is talking about a Democratic group ranging from somewhere in the middle of Mr. Muskie over to Messrs. Edward Kennedy, McGovern and even McCarthy. This group would include those Democrats who in 1968 supported Hubert Humphrey either reluctantly, barely or not at all.

It is not news that the relations between these Democrats and organized labor have been strained, primarily over foreign policy. Some of the strain is the fault of the Democrats which, just as Jackson charged, have not always credited labor with its remarkable accomplishments in the year-in, year-out political struggles. The Democratic left was slower than it should have been to recognize the deep distress caused by increasing crime rates, shifting life styles, and the economics of disarmament and conservation.

Jackson's account of the matter, however, is consistently exaggerated. It is not quite true that "unions have been in the forefront of everything decent in this country"; they have, unfortunately, led in several indecencies, from CIA hanky-panky to the SST to the war in Vietnam. As for racism, the labor movement *as a whole* can point to a better record than virtually any other American institution, although (a) that is still not good enough and (b) *parts* of the labor movement remain profoundly racist.

Senator Jackson's presentation of the law and order issue is no less inaccurate. There was a time when liberals were led by wishful thinking and admitted defects in crime statistics to pooh-pooh the clamor over crime in the streets—about five years ago, I think. Since then, they have confessed their errors in about a hundred magazine articles and speeches. Today the question is not whether crime is a real issue but what, beyond demagoguery, can be done about it. On that point, Jackson's thoughts are apparently exhausted by the admonition not to be "soft."

His accusation that environmentalists in the party want to go back to the agrarian age is of similar intellectual quality. In fact, voices on the Democratic left were the first to warn of the genteel, middle-class aspects of the ecology movement.

These distortions are merely unfortunate. Plainly pernicious is Jackson's declaration that left Democrats are hostile toward working people and contemptuous of their aspirations. Contempt there has been, of course—on all sides. One thinks of the gap between counter-culture youth and their parents. But such emotions have been peripheral to the real divisions between labor and the Democratic left; that a man can't tell the difference between Jerry Rubin and George McGovern is not much of a recommendation for the Presidency. Let Senator Jackson testify about cocktail party jokes, with which he is no doubt far more familiar than I. My infrequent forays into that territory do not corroborate his statement: the last time I heard a round of 'Polish jokes' was in an Irish Catholic home with impeccable working class and trade union credentials.

In my experience, most of those left Democrats who found they had grievances against the labor movement did so with real reluctance, not contempt. Maybe they were wrong. If Senator Jackson thinks so, if he wishes to argue the AFL-CIO case, on the war, on law and order, on ecology, fine. But if he wishes to poison the debate with accusations that are demagogic, vicious and unspecified, then contempt is indeed in order. For him.

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ELLSBERG AND THE NEW HEROISM

Throwing one's own complicity back in the face of power

TODD GITLIN

Daniel Ellsberg won't like being called a hero any more than I like calling him one. We have had enough of heroes who abuse the privilege to make themselves into celebrities in order to define their distance from the rest of us—a difficult thing to avoid when mass media are relied upon for images of honorable prowess. Besides, Ellsberg only did "what he had to do." But everyone does precisely that, no more, no less.

Ellsberg became a hero because of both opportunity and irreducible will, because he was in a position to be a certain kind of hero and because he had the grace or audacity or pigheadedness to seize the occasion; most people have none of these, and many who don't have his opportunity, or his complicity, splatter their will in fruitless symbolic violence. The hero is socially defined; he does what he has to do and other people make a place for him in their socialized categories. He does something that is not expected of him, something outside his boundaries of class, career, race, sex, as people who live within those boundaries see it; and if enough people can identify with his experience and therefore his need, he thereby stretches the boundaries of the possible, and beckons followers.

Ellsberg is an authentic hero, but he is not unprecedented. The specific nature of his achievement emerges most sharply in contrast to other styles of radical and anti-war activity. Most public political actions, whatever their virtues and vices, however effective or moving, however they feel from the inside, are, when seen from the outside, necessarily rather inexpressive of the people who take part in them. In a picket line, a demonstration crowd, or a riotous confrontation, one is playing a role, "standing up to be counted," *literally* to be counted, to become a number in a police estimate. The act, like voting, is impersonal; it does not flow from one's special experience, and does not express that experience except in a kind of muffled average. The act has no more or less significance whether X or Y is doing it, unless X happens to be Dr. Spock or Martin Luther King.

More expressive are actions which reveal both oppression and the self-affirming commitment of people to change the situation: sit-ins, freedom rides, strikes, occupations of buildings. Here the act is directly demonstrative of one's experience and demands: the black students assert their right to sit at a lunch counter by sitting at a lunch counter; people who live in slums assert their right to decent housing by squatting in unoccupied buildings. But both kinds of actions are joined by a sense of *innocence*: one knows one has been a victim, or at worst a passive bystander, but in any case one has been more acted upon than acting; one has not committed a concrete crime, nor has one been overtly rewarded for it; one is outraged at what has been done to Vietnam, or to oneself, by other people or forces or ideas; with the act one buttresses one's continuing innocence and forestalls any conceivable *future* complicity ("I don't want it said that I stood idly by. . . ."). This is why so many student demonstrators since Columbia have demanded amnesty; not only do they *feel* innocent, they want the authorities to recognize and validate that innocence. (This is diametrically opposed to the Gandhian idea that one who wants the society to change should himself suffer the social costs, that one should gladly accept the retaliation of one's enemies until they come to terms. But very few American activists have held fast to the

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logic of self-renunciation.) Conceivably, Freudians will argue, the demand for amnesty conceals a sense of (patricidal) guilt which can only be exorcised by the (paternal) authorities; one can dig endlessly for unconscious motives. But the point is that these activists *feel* innocent, and that measured by the standard of power, they *are* innocent if anyone is.

Of course there have been intermediate forms of activity, and corresponding varieties of heroism. Draft-card burners destroyed the emblems of their bondage and refused to be accomplices in murder, but by any commonsense estimate they were certainly more innocent than complicit; the fact was that they killed no one, nor even advised anyone to kill; they had not been in a position to do either. But their activity was directly expressive of the stakes of their own freedom; and since most Americans felt exquisitely innocent at the time, the draft-card burners had to take extreme measures and make themselves vulnerable to express both the need and the risk of real innocence. Those who turned in draft cards, or refused to step forward at induction, were also heroes, but their acts did not ripple very far outward; they were necessarily lost in the whirl of what is taken to be news. Those who burned draft files went still further out of their way to reject the lingering possibility of their complicity in the war, but most of them were not of draft age themselves; however driven by a sense of political obligation, even Christian guilt, by the standards of *overt* and *concrete* guilt they must be judged innocents. The Weathermen were also driven by both guilt and innocence, yet if one carefully examines the guilt which is being cast off in their deeds—guilt over having been rich, guilt over standing by while the Vietnamese are murdered—it becomes abstract, far-fetched, almost fantastic; they too act more from innocence than from complicity.

Complicity

The new heroism begins in undeniable complicity. There is nothing abstract about the complicity of Ellsberg or a Vietnam vet, especially one who has committed war crimes or been in a position to try to prevent them; it is embedded in acts of commission, not omission; it is not conjured up; it requires no psychoanalysis to be uncovered. The new heroism consists in conspicuously throwing one's own complicity back in the face of power, and thereby struggling to free oneself of it; I say "struggling" because I doubt this liberation comes with a single act, however dramatic. The act is a direct, unmistakable rejection of one's past participation in evil. What is different about the new heroes is that they know they have been accomplices, not merely in the passive sense in which almost all of us find ways to go along and can fairly be judged to be sanctioning the *status quo*; the new heroes can document the ways, they can explain them easily and plausibly to others. Ellsberg knows what advice he gave between 1964 and 1967, in the Pentagon and in Vietnam. The new heroism has a specific political location: it happens within the most potent institutions of social control.

I am thinking of the Vietnam Vets Against the War in Washington on April 23, each speaking a few words (no more were necessary) and hurling their medals at the Capitol: a clear message that the atonement and rebirth that was possible for them was possible for the Congress. As I watched the vets on TV I was moved as I had not been in a long time: I saw men reclaiming themselves, reliving both the monstrousness of what they had once found themselves doing and the passion of renewal. I am *not* thinking of the come-lately peaceniks, the Arthur Goldbergs and Townsend Hoopes' and Clark Cliffords, who exercise the luxury of last-minute conversions, making the relatively comfortable moves of election campaigns and books and speeches, without rejecting their previous roles or exposing their previous lies and barbarisms. They only take up the time-honored elite prerogative of deserting a sinking yacht: no regrets, no responsibility, faces turned photogenically to the wind, ascots carefully tucked into their blazers. If they atone at all it is within the conventions of their class; to probe their previous complicity too deeply in public would be to abandon their etiquette and their protection. One does not break the rules; indeed one follows them, for within the elite there is even a rule permitting, even encouraging discreet resignation and judiciously worded critical books and speeches at important junctures—when done with Olympian detachment and especially when there is a different party in power. (Not surprisingly, the high officials whose departures from government policy and finally from government have been most outspoken—Henry Wallace and Walter Hickel—were both, by geography and training, marginal to the elite.)

No, the easy-going converts are not heroes, though their repentance is politically useful by a crass calculation. But the vets and Daniel Ellsberg have rejected not only their past practices but their very codes and manners and security, the gentlemen's agreements, even the rules by which information is monopolized on top—the very practical rewards of past complicity. In May, according to Noam Chomsky in *The New York Review of Books* (June 17), Ellsberg joined the anti-war rally in Boston, where he went to the aid of a demonstrator being clubbed by a cop, and was himself beaten. Although the vets threw back only the symbols of their status, turned the tokens of their achievement into trash, those tokens were their only real rewards; in fact the society accords them no other privilege, in many cases not even jobs. Since his power and knowledge—and therefore his complicity—had been so much greater, Ellsberg had more to give, and gave it. "I felt," he told Walter Cronkite on June 23, "that the knowledge [of the Pentagon

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papers] gave me a kind of responsibility that others didn't have." Accordingly, he may have to pay a much higher price.

Certainly the new heroes have predecessors. I think of the German generals' 1944 plot against Hitler; the similarity may seem far-fetched, though grosser elite failures generate more extreme resistance at high levels, higher than Ellsberg's. But in recent American history I can only think of some of the Manhattan Project atomic scientists, whose complicity seems comparable to Ellsberg's. In Oppenheimer's words, they had "known sin," and after Hiroshima many of them moved to political action as atonement. (Ironically, their major victory, the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission to assert civilian control over the bomb, seems at this juncture utterly pyrrhic.) Few of them were interested in striking to stop bomb production, though such a proposal was floated in the government laboratories after the war. Individual actions were more comfortable and common: many left the labs, and a few simply abandoned physics, certain that their work would end up destructive. One of these was Leo Szilard, whose later attempt at political action, a fund-raising lobby called the Council for a Livable World, did succeed in helping elect George McGovern to the Senate. The political atomic scientists were heroes in their way, for they broke an age-old stereotype of the scientist "on tap, not on top"; for them, setting up an office and lobbying was almost as outrageous and unprecedented as throwing back medals or making documents public, though certainly not as risky as the latter. But one could also argue that the scientists, operating under a much less repressive regime, could and should have done much more.

Jorge Luis Borges says that every literary innovator calls forth, even "invents," his own predecessors. So it is with heroes, and it would be interesting to scour American history for other men and women who converted atonement to political action. But such a search should not obscure the fact that the new heroes are creatures and makers of an uncommon political situation. To put it crudely, in all societies advanced enough to do great evil, the innocents—those lacking direct access to the tools of evil, or lacking the luxury of time and information to form a moral judgment and act on it—greatly outnumber the accomplices, who in turn outnumber the high criminals.

There is, of course, the tricky question of how innocent are the innocents, as Milton Mayer discovered when he asked postwar German townspeople whether they had known about the concentration camps; he ended up not knowing what "knowing" meant, but suspecting that the townspeople "could have known" if they had invested some energy. (His *They Thought They Were Free* needs a revival at this moment.) When some of the worst atrocities are daily paraded across the dinner-time TV screen, the standards for innocence must be reassessed. But against the vagaries of ignorance and innocence stands the hard, undeniable knowledge and complicity of the State's hired hands: from the highest decision-makers and weapon-makers, down through the ranks of administrative advice and consent, to the soldiers and the police. When the State is confident, successful (in its own terms) and coherent, it can count on its hired hands. However upset or opposed are the passive citizens,, criminal power is intact as long as it holds the active loyalty of the accomplices, for the vast majority of citizens are marginal to the actual machinery of evil; the State can always resort to terror to pacify discontent outside administrative ranks. But when the evil is unspeakable enough, when evil's rewards aren't high enough or its explanations not compelling enough, the accomplices begin to doubt too. And when a certain critical mass of doubt is reached, accomplices begin to fall out: discreetly at first, then noisily, finally with action that reverberates throughout the society.

America in 1971 has reached that point. Aside from the vets and the organized anti-war soldiers on virtually every base, one can be sure there are thousands of GIs involved in a range of opposition from "not fighting very hard" to "fragging" to mutiny. This is at the lowest level of complicity, where the opportunity for evil is

most immediate and least willed; most GIs, especially draftees, had far fewer life-choices than Ellsberg or I or Robert McNamara or Richard Nixon. Yet also at the bottom of the pyramid of complicity, since disaffection is so widespread, there is some safety in numbers. In 1966, of course, when Green Beret Don Duncan quit the Army and published his denunciation of the war in *Ramparts*, he stood virtually alone; five years have made the difference between single hero and mass movement. Now it is Ellsberg who is isolated—but for how long?

At a congressional conference on war crimes last year, Ellsberg framed the special relationship between complicity and responsibility:

Notice that in the massacre at My Lai and in other

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such military incidents there were individuals who, despite apparent risk to their lives, did resist atrocities or at least failed to cooperate. It is a terrible shame—one that I share as a former official—that I know of no civilian official in the government who has acted comparably in any area of the Vietnam involvement.

He believed in "institutional and political changes," yet he was quick to add:

> Yet even if these changes do occur, I believe that we cannot avoid much, much worse crimes and horrors than we have seen in the past unless many individuals within the government do assume greater risks and a greater sense of responsibility than has been shown in the past decade. (*Los Angeles Times,* June 18)

First of Many

Perhaps Ellsberg will be the first in a new line of accomplices-turned-rebels; perhaps the *Times* will soon be deluged with documents expropriated from the expropriators. (It is delicious historical irony that the instrument of Ellsberg's act was that technological marvel, the Xerox machine, whose very built-in purpose, perverted by its cost and monopolization in hierarchical offices, is to explode private property in ideas and information.) Possibly the rebellion of accomplices would stir the higher past and present criminals to unease, and beyond unease to separation or even action. One could go so far as to imagine a series of public resignations and recantations, where disgust with the war is no longer whispered at dinner parties but proclaimed at press conferences, and specific lies are exposed. After all, it was as far back as 1964 or 1965, while he was working in the Pentagon, that Ellsberg first felt "while reading documents late at night that I was looking at future exhibits [in war crimes trials]" (*Los Angeles Times,* June 18). Plenty of other officials must have had the same sinking feeling. The new heroism might have great appeal for accomplices who could never fully identify with the flamboyant innocence of orthodox protests, but may recognize themselves in the public self-redemption of an Ellsberg. Certainly the vets and Ellsberg have spoken to younger people being trained to follow in their footsteps—and indeed to all of us, perched between innocence and complicity, who are from time to time clutched by the thought, "There but by the grace of class, age and education go I." No one gets a hearing like a repentant sinner, especially if he testifies vividly and even at cost to himself. Needless to say, the government will do everything possible to discourage emulation; Ellsberg must be made an object lesson.

The political effect of Ellsberg's action remains to be seen; Johnson ("close to treason") and McNamara ("the sensational way in which the documents were released is tragic") have been heard from, and of course the Administration. The *Times,* the *Post* and the *Globe* have become faintly heroic for daring—like most of the American people at this time—to proclaim that they are better judges of the national interest than the government: still another sign of the crisis of legitimacy throughout the society. (Ten years ago, the *Times* refused to report its knowledge of the upcoming Bay of Pigs invasion.) Praise where praise is due, high praise for daring to print the truth despite Mitchell, yet a sober look reveals that what replaces the government as the repository of wisdom is not the people or "the revolution" but the *Times.* Each of us with some part of himself is asked to file a private *amicus curiae* brief for that same *Times* whose distortions, biases and omissions are built into the very code of its objectivity.

The remarkable thing is that, according to the *Times'* and other papers' report of the Pentagon documents (I have not read the documents themselves), they seem to contain very little that has not been known, inferred, or deeply intuited by anti-war activists and scholars and by independent journalists like I. F. Stone, in hundreds of articles and books and speeches since 1965. The documents have only congealed the educated guess and sometime documentation of a minority into hard high-level information, sanctioned by a government seal. Will the *Times* now admit that it was tricked for six years and that the anti-war movement was not? Will Mr. Sulzberger reconsider his distaste for the Columbia students who in 1968 intuited and acted on the truth of the Pentagon study? Will he consider the proposition that there is something about the anti-war movement that better equips it to ask the right questions and to smell a rat than the *Times* itself with its vaunted objectivity? I don't imagine so, any more than he would concede and advertise the fact that *Liberation* and *Ramparts* and the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal uncovered American atrocities long before mass media were prepared to hear about My Lai. The continuing and saddening fact is that information becomes Fit to Print when the editors of *New York Times* are willing to define it that way. They still make the news, they still compose our minds and dispense legitimacy like holy water.

And yet one cannot afford the luxury of a wholehearted attack on the *Times.* What else was Ellsberg to do, Xerox a million copies of the documents and pass them out on the streets? Give them to the underground press? And then who would find the documents credible? That is precisely the point. "Indeed we live in the Dark Ages," when for truth one must rely on the very institution that has encouraged people not to believe what they discover elsewhere. Still—in the contest between Mitchell and Sulzberger I must certainly choose Sulzberger. Can I clap with one hand? I must root for the

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Times, all right, recognizing all the while that necessity seats me as only a spectator to this bare-fisted match between the powerful over the fate of millions. But my thoughts turn more to Ellsberg—it is most natural to root for him.

Ellsberg and the vets and many unorganized and anonymous new heroes have secularized redemption by converting private atonement into public political act. They justly accuse the top powers of having ordered their crimes, but they are not satisfied to stop there. The vets must tell their stories, even risking prosecution; Ellsberg must directly contest one of the State's most pernicious and hallowed prerogatives. At the end of his terrifying *New York Review* article about Nixon's Indochina strategy (March 11, 1971), Ellsberg wrote: "If we are ever to return to the soft quiet seasons—and we have not earned an easy passage—enough Americans must look past options, briefings, pros and cons, to see what is being done in their name, and to refuse to be accomplices." He is a man of his word, and so in this America he becomes a criminal.

ON BECOMING A CATHOLIC

The beginning of the affair

GRAHAM GREENE

Vivien was a Roman Catholic, but to me religion went no deeper than the sentimental hymns in the school chapel. "Lord Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing" represented the occasional mercy of God, and I enjoyed the luxurious melancholy of "Abide with Me." The only prize I had ever won at school was a special prize for an "imaginative composition," given by an elderly master in memory of his son killed in the first World War. It was the first time the prize had been awarded, and being a deeply religious man he was grieved that it should go to a story about an old senile Jehovah who had been left alone in a deserted heaven.

I met the girl I was to marry after finding a note from her at the porter's lodge in Balliol protesting against my inaccuracy in writing, during the course of a film review, of the "worship" Roman Catholics gave to the Virgin Mary, when I should have used the term "hyperdulia." I was interested that anyone took these subtle distinctions of an unbelievable theology seriously, and we became acquainted. Now it occurred to me, during the long empty mornings, that if I were to marry a Catholic I ought at least to learn the nature and limits of the beliefs she held. It was only fair, since she knew what I believed—in nothing supernatural. Besides, I thought, it would kill the time.

One day I took Paddy for a walk to the sooty neo-Gothic Cathedral—it possessed for me a certain gloomy power because it represented the inconceivable and the incredible. There was a wooden box for inquiries and I dropped into it a note asking for instruction. Then I went back to my high tea of tinned salmon and Paddy was sick again. I had no intention of being received into the church. For such a thing to happen I would need to be convinced of its truth and that was not even a remote possibility.

The impossibility seemed even more pronounced a week later when I returned to the Cathedral and met Father Trollope. I was to grow fond of Trollope in the weeks which followed, but at the first sight he was all I detested most in my private image of the church. A very tall and very fat man with big smooth jowls which looked as though they had never needed a razor, he resembled closely a character in one of those nineteenth-century paintings to be seen in art shops on the wrong side of Piccadilly—monks and cardinals enjoying their Friday abstinence by dismembering enormous lobsters and pouring great goblets of wine. Poor Trollope, his appearance maligned him. He led a very ascetic life, and one of his worst privations was the rule which, at that period, forbade him to visit the theater, for he had been an actor in the West End—not a star, but one of those useful reliable actors who are nearly always in demand for secondary roles. First he had become converted to Catholicism (Dr. Fray, that former ogre of Berkhamsted, had persuaded his family, who lived in Lincoln under the shadow of the deanery, to oppose his conversion), and then he was driven further by some inner compulsion to the priesthood. There were many plays on his shelves among the theological books—reading them was the nearest he could get to the footlights.

It was some weeks before he told me his story, and it came like a warning hand placed on my shoulder. "See the danger of going too far," that was the menace

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GRAHAM GREENE *is the British novelist. The above article is an excerpt from his autobiography* A Sort Of Life, *to be published by Simon & Schuster.* *Copyright 1971 by Graham Greene.*

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his story contained. "Be very careful. Keep well within your depth. There are dangerous currents out at sea which could sweep you anywhere." Father Trollope had been swept a very long way out, but the turbulent sea had not finished with him yet. He held a high position in the Catholic Nottingham world: he was Administrator of the Cathedral, well placed to rise into a hierarchy where men of business ability are valued, but he was deeply dissatisfied with any future which could be represented as success—he hadn't yet sacrificed enough, and a few years after I left Nottingham he wrote to tell me that he was entering an order, an order which was to my mind the least attractive of any, the Redemptorist. What had these monks, with an obligation to dwell in all their sermons and retreats on the reality of hell, in common with this stout cheerful man who loved the smell of grease paint and the applause at a curtain fall? Perhaps nothing except the desire to drown. A few years later he was dead of cancer.

It was quite a while before I realized that my first impression was totally false and that I was facing the challenge of an inexplicable goodness. I would see Trollope once or twice a week for an hour's instruction, and to my own surprise I came to look forward to these occasions, so that I was disappointed when by reason of his work they were canceled. Sometimes the place of instruction was an odd one—we began our lesson, perhaps, with a discussion on the date of the Gospels on the upper deck of a tram swaying out to some Nottingham suburb where he had business to do and concluded it with the significance of Josephus in the pious pitch-pine parlor of a convent.

I had cheated him from the first, not telling him of my motive in receiving instruction or that I was engaged to marry a Roman Catholic. At the beginning I thought that if I disclosed the truth he would consider me too easy game, and later I began to fear that he would distrust the genuineness of my conversion if it so happened that I chose to be received, for after a few weeks of serious argument that "if" was becoming less and less improbable. Bishop Gore in his great book on religious belief wrote that his own primary difficulty was to believe in the love of God; my primary difficulty was to believe in a God at all. The date of the Gopels, the historical evidence for the existence of the man Jesus Christ: these were interesting subjects which came nowhere near the core of my disbelief. I didn't disbelieve in Christ—I disbelieved in God. If I were ever to be convinced in even the remote possibility of a supreme, omnipotent and omniscient power I realized that nothing afterwards could seem impossible. It was on the ground of a dogmatic atheism that I fought and fought hard. It was like a fight for personal survival.

My friend Antonia White many years later told me how, when she was attending the funeral of her father, an old priest who had known her as a child tried to persuade her to return to the church. At last—to please him more than for any other reason—she said. "Well then, Father, remind me of the arguments for the existence of God." After a long hesitation he admitted to her, "I knew them once, but I have forgotten them." I have suffered the same loss of memory. I can only remember that in January 1926 I became convinced of the probable existence of something we call God, though now I dislike the word with all its anthropomorphic associations and prefer Chardin's "noosphere," and my belief never came by way of those unconvincing philosophical arguments which I derided in a short story called "A Visit to Morin."

"Oh," it may be said, "a young man is no match for a trained priest;" but in fact, at twenty-two, fresh from Oxford and its intellectual exercises, I was more capable of arguing an abstract issue or debating a historical point than I am today. The experience of a long life may possibly increase one's intuition of human character, but the mass of memories and associations which we drag around with us like an overfull suitcase on our interminable journey would weary me now at the start with all such arguments as we indulged in then. I cannot be bothered to remember—I accept. With the approach of death I care less and less about religious truth. One hasn't long to wait for revelation or darkness.

Although I was not received 'till early February 1926, I must have made my decision some weeks before, for I wrote flippantly to my mother in January, in the course of a letter full of other concerns, "I expect you have guessed that I am embracing the Scarlet Woman." The flippancy was fictitious: the fun of the intellectual exercise was over. I had reached the limit of the land and there the sea waited, if I didn't turn back. I was laughing to keep my courage up.

The first General Confession, which precedes conditional Baptism and which covers the whole of man's previous life, is a humiliating ordeal. Later we may become hardened to the formulas of Confession and skeptical about ourselves: we may only half intend to keep the promises we make, until continual failure or the circumstances of our private life finally make it impossible to make any promises at all and many of us abandon Confession and Communion to join the Foreign Legion of the Church and fight for a city of which we are no longer full citizens. But in the first Confession a convert really believes in his own promises. I carried mine down with me like heavy stones into an empty corner of the Cathedral, dark already in the early afternoon, and the only witness of my Baptism was a woman who had been dusting the chairs. I took the name of Thomas—after St. Thomas the doubter and not Thomas Aquinas—and then I went on to the *Nottingham Journal* office and football results and the evening of potato chips.

I remember very clearly the nature of my emotion as

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I walked away from the Cathedral: there was no joy in it at all, only a somber apprehension. I had made the first move with a view to my future marriage, but now the land had given way under my feet and I was afraid of where the tide would take me. Even my marriage seemed uncertain to me now. Suppose I discovered in myself what Father Trollope had once discovered, the desire to be a priest? At that moment it seemed by no means impossible. Only now after more than forty years I am able to smile at the unreality of my fear and feel at the same time a sad nostalgia for it, since I lost more than I gained when the fear belonged irrevocably to the past.

FEIFFER'S FOLLIES

THE SCREEN

In the opening scene of *Carnal Knowledge,* Susan (Candice Bergen) tells Sandy (Arthur Garfunkel) that everyone puts on an act at college mixers. Before Sandy can even agree, however, she decides the matter is more complicated than that. Yes, people do put on an act, and not just at mixers; but they couldn't behave any differently, even though they think they could, so there's no difference between the act and the real them. They are the act. Q.E.D. Sandy is totally wowed by this insight, and so, apparently, was Jules Feiffer. The rest of his screenplay is a testimony to Susan's wisdom. First Susan herself marries Sandy because she can't stop pretending she loves him. Next, since the marriage ruins the affair she was having with Sandy's Amherst roommate, Jonathan (Jack Nicholson), he rebounds to a lifetime of what he calls "ballbusters on parade." In the end he's so debilitated he can only make love when a prostitute (Rita Moreno) puts on a prearranged act to seduce him. Again, Q.E.D.

The idea that reality is indistinguishable from role-playing doesn't have to be as sophomoric as Susan is when she proposes it. In another version—"All the world's a stage"—it sustains some of Shakespeare's greatest plays. But Feiffer isn't Shakespeare, nor is *Carnal Knowledge* a great play. Obvious as it may seem to say so, *Carnal Knowledge* is an extension of Feiffer's cartoon strips. Susan's opening gambit about putting on an act is precisely what we might find in Feiffer's strip. It's the kind of reasoning that, having come out of a character's own mouth, circles around and sneaks up from behind to swallow him whole. As Susan finally admits to Sandy, they too are putting on an act even as they discuss doing so. Such endless self-analysis makes Feiffer's cartoon figures into solipsists. That's why they're so pathetic: they're completely alone. We're seldom sure whether that solitary figure in the strip is talking to some unseen companion, to us, or to himself. We only know it doesn't matter because his conversation is an unanswered monologue.

As the film's director, Mike Nichols accepts Feiffer's characters on Feiffer's terms, which sometimes means miming the way the cartoons present characters. More than once in the film, abrupt editing brings us face to face with a character who is talking about himself and, it seems, talking to no one in particular—a character who fills the screen the way the line-drawn figure fills the cartoon frame. But this time Feiffer has tried to break through the isolation of his characters. To make his cerebral humor dramatic, he's tried to put his characters in touch with each other and, thus, with the audience.

Nichols has done his best to help out too, although the attempt is doomed. Among the close-ups of deadpan monologues, for instance, Nichols slips in one where Miss Bergen giggles uncontrollably. Acting for the moment without self-consciousness, she becomes that antithesis of a Feiffer character which Feiffer himself seems to have hoped for. But Nichols has had to improvise this vignette outside the confines of the script. Only in one or two clashes between Jonathan and Bobbie (Ann-Margret), the "Ballbuster" of record, does Nichols get from the script the humanity Feiffer wanted to put in it.

Of course it isn't Feiffer who's selling tickets to this film. It's Nichols. He's the only American director getting his name above the title on the marquee these days. He's even described as an Orson Welles who's made it commercially. Yet Nichols' films still don't have the one thing Welles' did right from the start: a style of their own. Publicity has made the Nichols name readily identifiable, while his films remain, if not anonymous, at least non-descript and eclectic. I assume Feiffer would praise Nichols as profusely as Edward Albee and Joseph Heller did when Nichols directed their material. But being congratulated by the writer isn't the highest accolade a director can receive. Nichols' most serious limitation so far is that he's too much of a writer's director. His work has acquired a chameleon quality, always hiding against the background of the script.

If Feiffer turned his hand to cartooning for *Mad, Little Murders* would be the result. In the opening scene of this film, as of *Carnal Knowledge,* boy meets talkative girl. Except that here the boy is being mugged at the time. The mugging is in fact the main event: that boy and girl have met is only secondary. Perhaps because *Little Murders* represents an earlier writing effort—its script having been adapted by Feiffer from his 1967 stage play—this film doesn't suffer from the growing pains apparent in *Carnal Knowledge.* It doesn't try to exceed the mentality of the cartoons at all. It's a script dealing with social ecology, not private lives: a script

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This Fall

AS THE VIETNAM WAR continues slowly to wind down, new confrontations threaten—between India and Pakistan, in Northern Ireland, in the embattled Middle East. The China-Taiwan question will be up before the U.N., while preparations for the Presidential visit to Peking develop. At home the struggle against business-decline, inflation and unemployment intensifies as Mr. Nixon fights to save the dollar. Meanwhile the Democrats continue to search for a viable Presidential candidate. A historic Bishops' Synod will take place in Rome.

In other words, many key developments for peace, justice, economic recovery and Christian renewal loom just ahead. This fall is a season when it will be well worth keeping in touch by reading a perceptive journal of opinion week by week.

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about how people interact with New York, not each other.

The girl, Patsy (Marcia Rodd), eventually takes home the boy, Albert (Elliott Gould), to meet her upper West-Side family. No one seems to mind when the lights keep going out during dinner. But Patsy's parents are upset that Albert, having given up being a successful fashion photographer, now takes pictures exclusively of dog shit. And everyone is upset by Patsy's and Albert's wedding ceremony, which Albert's existentialist friend (Donald Sutherland) performs. Her parents are reconciled to Albert, however, after she is killed by a sniper. Even the heavy breather who's been calling for months offers condolences.

The principle of composition that governs those monologues in the cartoons defeats *Little Murders'* larger scheme as a screenplay. The cartoons are funny by being only a slight exaggeration. Their conception is never outlandish: it's their verisimilitude that impresses us. But *Little Murders* is too slight an exaggeration to be funny at all. Citizens of the upper West Side now hire private guards with truncheons to protect them from mugging and random violence. Compared to a reality that's so advanced, the parents' apartment in the film—with its steel shutters and riot-gothic appointments—seems to lose something as a set for the theater of the absurd.

Adding a few other locations to Feiffer's stage play, which took place entirely in the parents' apartment, is about all that's been done to adapt the play to the screen. Except for the mugging at the beginning, and a bloody subway ride, no significant action has been added to the film version. Although both the belly laughs and the grimness *might* have been increased if more of the escapades reported in the dialogue were acted out, director Alan Arkin hasn't attempted such radical departures from the play. This may be because Arkin, making his debut as a director, is being purposely conservative and cautious. But it seems just as likely that it was because he simply wasn't that interested in the lead roles. Arkin's fancy is unmistakably the role he reserved for himself—that of Lt. Practice, a detective driven mad by his inability to solve all the little murders. Like some of the great silent comedians (Keaton, for instance), Arkin may not relish the chance to direct so much as the chance to direct himself. Lt. Practice's appearance is only a five-minute cameo; but if anything in this film is worth the price of admission, that five minutes is it.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Summer Schedule

In keeping with the usual practice, *Commonweal* is again appearing on alternate weeks during the summer months. The next issue will be dated September 17. From then on we will resume our normal weekly publishing schedule.

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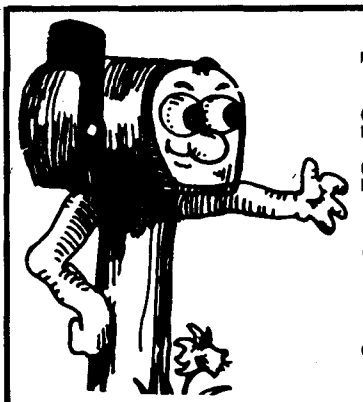

THE SOUTHERN STAMP STRATEGY

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CHRISTOPHER NORWOOD

SOME months ago, before the great postal price hike, I went to my local post office in pursuit of 6¢ stamps. At the window, upon my request for ten stamps, I was, as usual, handed ten stamps bearing the American flag. As usual, I looked at them glumly and asked the postmaster if he didn't have "any pretty stamps." I have nothing against the American flag. I am just tired of gluing it on my letters. And, I rather look forward to different stamps for their potential as small pleasures, unexpected bits of color and interest. Well, the postmaster had nothing else—no American buffaloes, no Haida ceremonial canoes, no celebrations of 150 years of Maine statehood, no tributes to professional baseball. Exasperated at the thought of another month of being forced to lick the back of the American flag to complete my onerous responsibilities toward my landlord, the New York Telephone Company and Con Edison, I complained. "People are sick of this stamp," I said. "It's all they've had for years."

"Oh, no," replied the postmaster. "I don't think they're sick of this stamp. I think it's the Franklin Roosevelt stamp they're sick of." And, sure enough, the Franklin Roosevelt stamp was revoked a few months later and replaced by the Eisenhower stamp—the second Eisenhower stamp the Nixon Administration has managed to issue in as many years.

At any one time, the Post Office has two Regular Series stamps—"workhorses" as they are called in the jargon of the business—at the current price of first-class mail. The Regular Series are used for books and rolls. During the course of the year, the Post Office also issues about 24 Commemoratives at first-class and other rates. The Commemoratives have a two-fold purpose. They bring in considerable revenue from stamp collectors. And, they are meant, according to the Postal Service Manual, to promote "the ideals, progress and heritage" of the United States. Under the Nixon Administration, the promotion has been mainly political and at a rate unprecedented in Post Office history.

Perhaps it was only natural that a Republican Administration should issue a Commemorative for Eisenhower and then issue another stamp of him to substitute for Roosevelt as the other stamp aside from the American flag in the Regular Series. (Although it is ironic that Roosevelt has been removed from his place of honor in the stamp world. A philatelist himself, Roosevelt first encouraged the Post Office to issue more Commemoratives to raise money.) Under Postmaster General Winton Blount, what is natural has gone beyond honoring Republican Presidents and turned our postage stamps into six (now 8) cents-plain of propaganda for the Administration's domestic and foreign policies, as well as Republican politics.

The next time I went to the Post Office, I noticed I would now have a choice. Two Commemoratives had been issued, one for the 300th anniversary of the State of South Carolina and the other to salute the Stone Mountain Memorial. The Carolina stamp was not suspect. The Post Office regularly celebrates the anniversaries of every state in the union. However, I was intrigued by the gyrations of an Administration that issues denouncements of revolutionaries as regularly as the Post Office issues stamps and then honors the only people who have actually led an armed revolt against the United States Government. Not that I mind. If a carving of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson means that Con Edison and I get some variety in our communications, I have no complaint.

Indeed, the Southern stamp strategy has suited my purposes admirably. Remember that craggy face of Lincoln which presided over the 5¢ postcard you used for perfunctory communications? No longer will his stern eyes seem to reproach you with a reminder that you should have sent a decent letter instead of your 3" x 5½" worth of scribbling. Lincoln has been replaced by Paul Revere at 6¢. Yes, Lincoln was the first Republican President; but, he also emancipated the slaves. Columnist Jack Anderson says this change was made at the order of Postmaster General Blount, who wishes to impress upon his native Alabama that the citizens may trust in him when he runs for the Senate in 1972. Even so, I am sure we can all appreciate that Revere is much jollier than Lincoln.

The other President canceled by the Nixon Administration is, more than naturally, John F. Kennedy. Kennedy was on the 13¢ overseas air letters and the 13¢ stamp. (While putting Kennedy on the 13¢ stamp, done during the Johnson Administration, may seem to be the least gracious act the Post Office has ever taken, there is an explanation of sorts. Kennedy was scheduled for the 11¢ stamp, but the rates went up.) Kennedy has been replaced with birds. I can easily understand the change. The portrait of Kennedy's head troubled me a bit each time I saw it. Well—you know—why bother to think about the whole thing at all? Birds, no doubt, are more to the point.

Bringing the war policy into stamps

CHRISTOPHER NORWOOD, *a previous contributor, is currently working on a book about Paterson, New Jersey.*

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has presented the Nixon Administration with a more subtle challenge. There is just no way to "salute" openly the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, there has been an outpouring of "war appreciation" themes unequaled since the Second World War. Except for tributes to the branches of the Armed Services issued during peace intervals, World War II was the only time the Post Office chose to include war with our "ideals, progress and heritage" since the first national issue was made in 1847.

Under the Nixon Administration, we have had an American Legion stamp, a commemorative for the Disabled Veterans Association and a General Douglas MacArthur stamp. The General did, after all, enthusiastically wage an unpopular Asian war and warn us to pong the Chinese.

And, we have had the strangest stamp in Post Office history. That is a stamp which simply says in bold type "Honoring U.S. Servicemen Prisoners of War Missing and Killed in Action." It is only the second U.S. stamp to appear that is entirely graphic and has no illustration. This stamp came out soon after what was probably the first occasion in history that the Postmaster General of the United States was called upon to issue war policy. Mr. Blount, at an elaborate press conference, announced that President Nixon had ordered him to go to North Vietnam himself if necessary to deliver Christmas packages to American POW's. The *New York Times*, in its typically snide manner, noted that the announcement was "greeted with skepticism." Clearly, the Postmaster General tried his best. He set out bravely and got as far as Paris.

Anyway, the stamp was issued at Blount's order and produced so quickly there wasn't time to make an illustration. A member of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee says it was rushed so it would be issued "in time to be effective." Apparently "effective" meant reminding us during the Christmas season of the Nixon Administration's good will toward the POW's and the President's determination not to settle the war until they are released. Surely there is no deeper meaning to Christmas.

Ostensibly, there is a Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of 11 members "whose judgment and taste can be relied upon to improve the quality of both subject choice and artistic presentation of our stamps," according to a Post Office pamphlet. (The members include such people as Mrs. Paul Mellon, James B. Wyeth, J. Carter Brown, Col. Randle Truett of Virginia and Walter MacPeek of *Boy's Life* magazine.) However, the Postmaster General has the final say, and he is taking the final say. As much as all the changes made by the Nixon Administration have suited me, somehow I can't help but look back nostalgically to the days when stamps bore nothing but Founding Fathers, Presidents and an occasional Pony Express Rider and hope—dare I say it—that this Administration has finally had its 2¢ worth with the stamps.

BOOKS

Catholic revolutionaries: part of the solution or part of the problem?

Whose Heaven, Whose Earth?

THOMAS & MARJORIE MELVILLE

Knopf, $6.95

Revolutionary Priest: The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN GERASSI

Random House, $10; Vintage Paper, $2.45

JAMES FINN

I'm glad I don't know the Melvilles. Not because I think they are unattractive or unlikable people. Both their book and what I have heard about them suggest they are lively, idealistic *and* attractive. But if I knew them I would find it more difficult to say the harsh things that their book deserves. Reading it, I understand better why Ivan Illich referred to them as "dilettantes, ingenues."

All those who have attended to the creation of that amorphous beast "the Catholic Left" must know at least that Thomas and Marjorie Melville were two of the Catonsville Nine, a group that was duly tried, convicted, and sentenced for burning Selective Service records on May 17, 1968. This book is the story of what prepared them for that act. For ten years, Thomas Melville worked as a Maryknoll missionary among the Indians of Guatemala, and Sister Marian Peters (Marjorie Melville) even longer as a Maryknoll nun in Guatemala City. Initially, they followed the pattern that they themselves, their Order and many of us expected of such missionaries. They taught, baptized, converted, preached. They brought the Gospel to the unchurched.

Today, they follow another pattern that has become familiar. They found that the church stood in the way of what they wished to accomplish for and with the Indians—the betterment of their social and economic state—in the way of their own growing commitment to revolution, in the way of their own development as persons. Forced to leave Guatemala, they were quietly married in Mexico and returned to the States to pursue, as a married couple, their new political and social goals.

In alternating His and Hers sections, and in the flattest prose, the Melvilles tell what led them to change one pat-

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tern for another, what caused them to become, in the contemporary cliché, politicized and radicalized. On the basis of their stories, particularly Tom Melville's, the Order that prepared them for missionary work has a lot to answer for. He still speaks fondly of the Maryknoll seminary, warm and friendly in contrast to the "somber and studious" mood he found in other seminaries. A little somber study would have benefitted him mightily. For example, when he went to Guatemala, he was convinced that it was not important whether one understood prayers, it was enough to learn them by rote. "I was convinced that most of the Indians, even those who took part in Catholic services but who did not learn the teachings in the catechism, were in peril of everlasting hellfire." Believing that, he refused to baptize a child because the prospective godmother did not learn some catechism lessons in Spanish. And when the child's father protested vigorously, Father Melville knocked him down.

From this position, Tom Melville could only advance, and he began his arduous journey by learning to work with, live with and listen to the Indians. "Gradually we began to realize that our God was the same." Scabs falling from his eyes, he began to see many things more clearly: the oppression and misery of the Indian; the church as supporter of the status quo; the domination of Guatemala—and other Latin American countries—by the United States; the value of love, sex and marriage. Sister Marian's course roughly paralleled his until their paths crossed and together they developed their present critique of the church and the U.S. government, a critique that allows Tom to say:

"The rights and wrongs of such a struggle don't often come in white and black; there are many hues of gray involved. Yet, in our experience, the Catholic church and the United States government have *inevitably* failed to recognize this.

"We hope that by explaining who we are, what we saw, and how we responded, people will understand why we have lost faith in the hierarchy of the Catholic church and in the U.S. government, and why we feel that both *only* exacerbate the struggle, and hinder the quest, for human dignity in so many parts of the world." [Italics added. J.F.]

Well, it's hard to detect many shades of gray in these flat charges—or in others scattered through the book. They have perceived real injustices and they are angered into making severe judgments. What becomes gradually clear is that the Melvilles have changed the pattern of their lives but not their mindset. They have adopted a new political catechism next to which the old Baltimore catechism is a model of subtlety, discrimination and intellectual refinement. But they are still missionaries, eager to convert. Unable, apparently, to distinguish between the spiritual and the social—"is there a difference?" Tom asks—they now bring to social matters the same moral arrogance and simple-mindedness they initially brought to matters religious. And we are now to be converted to their black and white view of the world, to look upon the church and the U.S. as devils and revolution as the path to salvation. I have little doubt of the Melvilles' integrity, sincerity, compassion or courage, but if we are to judge only on the basis of this book, they are not part of the solution; they have become part of the problem.

Revolutionary Priest is another matter entirely. John Gerassi has performed a real service in editing the writings of Camilo Torres. Not actually complete, the collection offers as much as most people would want and certainly enough to allow one to trace the course of Torres' progress from priest-sociologist to violent revolutionary. Gerassi's introduction also helps to trace his passage from his upper-middle-class family to his present position as a hero of the Left in Latin America and, to some degree, in the United States.

There is, as Gerassi states, a small but growing number of revolutionary priests in Latin America. Although distinctions are in order as one moves from one Latin American country to another, one can also make sound generalizations. The revolutionary impulse in Latin America is fueled by several converging perceptions: the belated discovery within the church of Marx, the sociologist and economist; an intensified awareness of the injustices of an oligarchic system; a comprehensive view of the international economy which sees the U.S. as a dominant agent, a perpetuator of the status quo; a consequent rejection of the "production-consumption system" demanded by capitalism; a determination, sustained by Vatican II, *Populorum Progressio,* and related events, that the church will be an active agent in the liberation of man, including liberation from severe injustice.

The confluence of such attitudes and perceptions gradually led Camilo Torres to a revolutionary position, to a belief that only violence could break the hold of the dominant class, the oppressive system. He came to believe that "the Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin." Similar perceptions have led other Latin American priests to follow quite different paths. Helder Camara, for example, is devoted to non-violence. But he has also said that, "It seems to me that we should respect the memory of Camilo Torres and Che Guevara as much as that of Reverend Martin Luther King." And, in many parts of Latin America, the memory of Torres is so respected. But respect does not always mean emulation. When I was in South America last year I was frequently told by people sympathetic to Torres that his was not the best means to bring about the changes they wanted. The Left in Latin America is divided. Or, to state it in another way, the Left is made up of diverse people with diverse views. This volume presents a good expression of one important strand of the Left.

In addition to editing this volume, John Gerassi has presented strong, informed, and didactic statements of his own. In my view, he presents some of the best and some of the worst in contemporary radicalism. But in his view, I acknowledge, my opinions may ap-

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pear to be those of a liberal. And on to that serious problem. Passing over those questions on which Gerassi and I agree, I will mention only the questionable or the outrageous. Gerassi speaks admiringly of Juan Perón, "whom liberal historians in the United States branded a fascist." Like many populists, Perón did some good things, but he was a bad ruler who harmed his country, and that verdict is not limited to liberal historians.

But it is the position from which Gerassi makes such judgments that is crucial. It has by now become familiar. The system is bad, the U.S. is its principal caretaker and beneficiary, the young perceive its injustice and its strength, it must be overcome even by violence, once overcome a new non-exploitive system will release man into his freedom. The force and depth of Gerassi's commitment to this position demand some quotation.

"Today the peasant more and more identifies the source of *all* violence and injustice with the United States. Quite rightly so." (Italics added. J.F.)

"Thus American 'democracy' with its 'free' speech and 'free' press is part and parcel of American society, a society based on greed, competition, oppression and, increasingly more evidently, on murder, invasion, and occupation. It must be stopped precisely because of its inherent violence. It must be destroyed. And the only way to do that is by smashing it through counterviolence."

"The world has progressed, and it will continue to do so . . . [Man] is not forced to hate by God, but by other men. He can be gentle or cruel; it is society that makes him that way, and society is man-made."

In these statements we have many of the elements of philosophical liberalism as it has developed historically: the belief in inevitable progress, the natural goodness of man, the evil of societal structures. And where do they lead Gerassi? Among other things to the defense of a black man who "sits on a rooftop and calmly snipes away at a white cop." He's fighting the system, you see. And we are to believe that these and other associated acts of violence are to lead to the Utopia of the new man. (I pass over in silence, eyes averted, assertions such as that Huntley and Brinkley should be superceded by Jerry Rubin and Abby Hoffman in the Utopian future. They would only show that one man's Utopia is another's nightmare.)

These views of Gerassi's are some distance removed from contemporary liberalism with its programmatic, ameliorative approach, the liberalism on which conservative and radical forces have declared open season. But they are in accord with elements of a discredited philosophical liberalism. This aspect of Gerassi's thought threatens to obscure the very real insights and valuable analysis offered by Gerassi, Torres and others. Put at the service of contemporary revolutionism, philosophical liberalism could lead the best-intentioned people to an untimely and unproductive death.

The Power to be Human

CHARLES C. WEST

Macmillan, $7.95

T. PATRICK BURKE

The final sequence of Stanley Kubrick's movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* begins with a spectacular kaleidoscope of scenery: the space pilot, and with him the viewer, swoops and dives over a succession of brilliant landscapes. The journey proves lengthy, however, and the end is not so much a conclusion as a puzzle: a lot of territory has been covered, and we are still up in the air.

Charles West has the courage to conduct us on a tour into an area of quite special importance: the crisis of self-confidence which has come upon two of our most prominent pace-setters, the scientists and the revolutionaries. There was a time when it seemed that the scientific method and its application in technology held out to mankind a promise of ultimate liberation. There was also a time when it seemed that the social consciousness of Marxism possessed the key to the development of a uniquely free humanity. The more sensitive members of both groups now realize that their confidence was excessive: technology propagates itself without reference to human values, and therefore against them; the revolution, once it has happened, becomes the status quo, and the revolutionary becomes the conservative.

Mr. West refers to the first kind of optimism as technological humanism, heir to liberalism, and to the second as revolutionary humanism. Most of the book is given to a detailed account and analysis of a meeting between representatives of the two camps which took place at Geneva in 1966, the World Conference on Church and Society. The author's thesis, which appears towards the end of the book, is that the two movements are in crisis because they are humanisms, because they rely on human resources alone, instead of on the transcendent power of God which is forever breaking through man's constructions. The Bible, he further maintains, shows us that knowledge takes place only in commitment, not in detached observation, even though commitment necessarily involves the risk of guilt. The point seems to be that both technologists and revolutionaries, especially the latter, should take heart and carry on.

The book has one considerable merit, its topic, and a somewhat lesser virtue, the author's thesis about it, which is not developed as clearly as one might wish. A great deal of what passes for scholarship consists in commenting on other peoples' comments on other peoples' comments. Unfortunately this book belongs squarely in that category: it is a haystack of quotations and opinions, in which the author's fine needle is almost lost. Mr. West's use of language is frustrating. So long as he talks about technology and revolution he uses regular, solid English, in a style which, though prosaic, speaks to our experience. But whenever he comes to speak of matters theological the gears are shifted, and we find ourselves in another world, where "the decisive victory has already been won by Christ," and "the future belongs to Jesus Christ

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. . . and the signs of his victory break in upon the present from that future."

The shadow of Karl Barth hangs over the endeavor, cutting off the world of reason from that of Christianity, resulting in a language that is frequently tortuous, as the author strives, admirably, to link the two somehow, but perhaps against the odds.

Birds of America

MARY McCARTHY

Harcourt Brace, $6.95

FOSTER HIRSCH

One of the refreshing qualities of Mary McCarthy's charming new novel is its adroit sidestepping of the all but inevitable clichés of the *Bildungsroman*: here is an account of a young man's archetypal passage from adolescence to maturity which bypasses sexual encounters as briskly and logically as it avoids the customary sequence of disillusionment and lost ideals. Peter Levi, Miss McCarthy's earnest, reclusive, half-Jewish, half-Gentile Candide-like hero, retains his purity even as he loses his intellectual (if not sexual) innocence. Despite his exposure to experiences which confront him with the certain knowledge that this is not the best of all possible worlds, he doesn't deviate from trying to conduct his life according to egalitarian, Kantian ethics.

Miss McCarthy's basic strategy follows the standard literary pattern of offering dramatic highlights of the adventures of a young man abroad, a device which allows for the Henry James-like confrontation between American and continental temperaments. This central procedure is framed by such equally familiar literary paraphernalia as the insistent equation between characters and their environment, between the world of humans and the world of nature. (Thus Peter's maternal attachments are dual—to his actual mother and to Nature, his surrogate mother, and the "birds" of the title refer to the migratory patterns of Americans abroad as well as to species like the cormorant.) Further, some of Miss McCarthy's observations conform to expectation: her depiction of Americans as vulgar tourists, of the French as arrogant and unlikable, of the Italians as warm and volatile, is hardly revolutionary, and her theme of a plastic, polluted America which has lost its sense of frontier and its closeness to nature, approaches at times a facile, almost commonplace, conception. Yet more often than not the clichés are overturned, reworked into fresh, life-giving terrain: a group of prying, limited mid-American schoolteachers on holiday turn out to be capable of an act of real generosity, Peter's hovering, self-pitying French landlady ultimately earns our sympathy, a brash, hustling Princetonian becomes a true friend. Pleasant surprises and reversals almost continuously enrich the narrative: Peter has a remarkably close attachment to his mother and yet he is not even remotely homosexual and, what's more, he even gets along with his several stepfathers; Roberta, the very singular and peculiar vegetarian who seems destined to be Peter's first love, glides unobtrusively and asexually out of the novel; the drunken prostitute whom Peter takes to his room as an act of charity (he feels guilty because he has a place to sleep while she must recline on the stairs) is neither kindly nor garrulous nor seductive, but simply frightened and animal-like and she terminates their unusual encounter by sneaking off in the early morning after pointlessly stealing Peter's door knob.

That the characters are sympathetically observed is a projection of the quality of Miss McCarthy's delightfully sweet-natured but unsentimental hero who surmounts the impurities of the moral and physical landscape through which he moves. Significantly, but perhaps misleadingly, the novel opens ("In the Wild Life Sanctuary, the Great Horned Owl had died") and closes ("Nature is dead, *mein kind*") with references to death. Though Peter progresses from unawareness to recognition of death and change and the corrosions of time, his own interior values are undimmed by the implications of nature's impermanence and man's betrayal of his environment; despite the actual and symbolic deterioration of the natural world, he remains life-affirming. At the beginning of the novel, his idealizing vision is truly innocent, at the end, it is open-eyed, alert to the world: that he retains his sense of the potential fineness of life is his (and the book's) special triumph.

The two opening chapters, which take place in a remote New England community, are a prologue and contrast to the hero's experiences abroad. A four-year interval separates the events of the two sections; in each, Peter lives alone with his mother; he remembers their original stay in Rocky Port as joyously remote and tranquil, but, the second time, as he tries to recreate his initial sense of things, he is confronted with change: The Great Horned Owl, whom he had thought timeless, like Faulkner's bear, is dead, and the Wild Life Sanctuary, which he had likewise believed was untouchable, has been invaded by a highway. In addition, a waterfall much admired by him and his mother during their first residence, seems to have disappeared, and his favorite birds, the cormorants, are distressingly absent.

The changes in nature parallel the changes in Peter's perception of Rocky Port: his earlier vision of the town's remote purity is replaced by his awareness of the townspeople's frozen-TV-dinner existence and their rigid code—a system to which his spirited mother will not submit. The traditional bake sale, one of the few remnants of old-time Americana, is now governed in absentia by anonymous commercial interests, and a garden tour offers mostly weeds and rocks.

Rocky Port's loss of a pristine, vigorous frontier spirit, its parochialism and cowardice, comes to represent America in miniature, an America of diminished force lamented by both the hero and his creator. Peter, then, embarks for Europe impressed by the eclipse of the New World, but there are no easily schematized loyalties in Miss McCarthy's cosmology: like the author, Peter is ashamed and proud of his American heritage, of the once-

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tough fibre gone flabby, just as he is awed and irritated by Old World tradition and insularity.

In its interest in art and travel and culture and the general life of the intellect, in its plentiful literary allusions and its references to Eastern boarding schools and Ivy League colleges, and in its concern with radical (or at least liberal) politics, *Birds of America* clearly bears its author's stamp, incorporating as it does virtually all of the absorptions of previous publications. But the book particularly recalls (is, in fact, a kind of companion piece to) *The Company She Keeps,* Miss McCarthy's first novel. *Birds of America* reflects the political and intellectual zeitgeist of the 60s as richly as the earlier book spoke for the 30s. Peter Levi is every bit as engaged by the events of his time—Viet Nam, civil rights, pollution—as Meg Sargent was involved in the issues of her era—Marxism, socialism. Both characters are a mixture of egalitarian ideals and private school separatism; both confront problems of adjustment which are a result of their fine perception and intellect. Miss McCarthy's leisurely pace allows sufficient time for the characters to express their views on current events—one chapter in *Birds of America* is largely devoted to a many-sided debate on Viet Nam, but the political opinions are used as a reflection, an extension, of character, and not for any directly polemical purposes.

Like *The Company She Keeps*, this latest novel is organized in terms of separate episodes; the narrative technique is thus fragmented and anecdotal, yet the individual units contain an elaborate network of thematic cross-references which cohere into a thickly textured whole. Made up really of six longish short stories, *The Company She Keeps* allowed Miss McCarthy opportunity for virtuoso manipulation in point of view; here, characters and events are more of a piece, we remain close to Peter, seeing the world pretty much from his perspective, yet there are subtle shifts in point of view from irony-tinged long shots to intimate close ups, and, mid-way, the dominant narrative mode is interrupted by a long letter from Peter to his mother which introduces a vivid sense of immediacy.

Miss McCarthy is clearly very close to the experiences recorded in both books, but Peter, a young male, is much less directly a repository for her own observations and self-analysis than the earlier protagonist. In replacing the overwrought, theatrical, self-lacerating, guilt-ridden Meg Sargent with the sober, purity-seeking Peter Levi, the author has established a more secure aesthetic distance from her material. The flamboyance of the first book is exchanged for the wiser, mellower, more detached tone here: the book's serenity is reflected in the unfalteringly sturdy and graceful prose, the fluid, rolling style, the beautifully poised periodic sentences. *Birds of America* was written by a lovely person.

Our Land Too

TONY DUNBAR

Pantheon, $5.95

JAMES BRANSCOME

Complacency must be reshattered periodically; the tendency to forget requires refresher courses in remembering and knowing. Those who are complacent rejoice in the mediocre, in the barriers they place between themselves and the frantic rhythm of events (and non-events). Those who forget, either from world weariness or in the search for a new and solvable problem, leave in their wake that which they confronted but could not overcome. The complacent and the forgetful, both share some responsibility for our inability to deal meaningfully and successfully with social problems. Indeed, if they had their way, everyone could find his own brand of soma, shallow but satisfying, dealing with the world that is too much with us. Fortunately, there are a few who will not let us forget or be complacent. They bring back the failures of the past and tell us that our efforts were not enough.

Tony Dunbar in *Our Land Too* has performed such a service by retelling the story of two heartlands of poverty, the Mississippi Delta and the Eastern Kentucky Mountains of Appalachia. By his account (and my experience leads me to agree) these two areas, once the darlings of activists, are no better off after the brief flash of moral fervor over their poverty and oppression during the mid-'60s. In fact, the hills and the Delta are worse off than before not only because the glittering promises for reform were fool's gold but also because the forces of oppression have retrenched in a more violent (economically and physically) line of defense.

In the Delta, mechanization has eliminated for the black share-croppers even the scanty income to be earned from picking cotton. In Eastern Kentucky the poverty programs have dwindled in number and magnitude; what brief hope they held has vanished in the labyrinth of federal and state bureaucracies. What is remarkable is that despite massive hemorrhages of the economic system the people who choose to remain in the isolated hollows or on the flat, sun-stroked Delta show a tremendous ability to survive. Tony Dunbar lets them speak in their own words of their lives and the meager remedies their resources permit them. The first section of *Our Land Too* records many conversations with blacks and covers subjects ranging from diet to housing to income to jobs. It is a grim panorama of near-starvation, starvation wages, primitive housing and disease. However, underneath the tales of hardship there are glimmers of defiance and resistance born out of necessity and anger. To be sure, the act of survival is an act of defiance in the Delta, but the blacks have advanced from survival to action. Their tenacious fight to maintain the Head Start programs, for instance, even without federal money, is an indication that, maybe, a revolution is in the making in the Delta. In 20 years, as Mr. Dunbar suggests, dramatic changes for the better may be won.

Until those 20 years have elapsed, if ever, life will not be much easier in the Delta. In his conclusion, Dunbar says that in the spring of 1970 the bodies

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of three black men were dragged from the Sunflower River. One was Rainey Pool, who was killed "after an incident at a 'white' night spot." The parents of the other two thought they were in Chicago. The days of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman are not past in the sunbeaten country around the towns of Louise and Midnight in Humphreys County, Mississippi.

The second section, dealing with Clay County, Kentucky, is a dialogue rather than a survey. Tape-recorded interviews with Robert Messer, a coal miner turned community organizer, are the core of this section. Around Messer's comments, Dunbar weaves his own narrative of the people and the land. The results are highly complementary. The colloquialism of Messer adds the substance of experience to Dunbar's writing.

Messer's life is a microcosm of the Appalachian condition. He went to work in the mines at an early age, his breath is shortened by rock dust, but he has maintained an independence and stamina of spirit which make him very much his own man.

He says, "I wouldn't advise none of my children to go into the coal mines. . . . I took one boy in. . . . There wasn't nothin' else he could do here. . . . I said don't go. But he said I've got to work. . . . I told him not to go and I'll tell the next boy not to go. Fer there's nothin' in the coal mines. You get the rock dust. You get the black lung. You work like a slave."

On December 30, 1970, 38 miners died in an explosion on Hurricane Creek near Hyden in Leslie County. Most of those 38 were from Clay County. Investigation showed that the mine operators had consistently ignored safety requirements specified by the Federal Coal Mine and Safety Act of 1969. Enforcement of the Act was nearly nonexistent at the Finley Brothers' mine on Hurricane Creek, despite warnings and a temporary shutdown by mine inspectors. Why the inspectors allowed the mine to operate at all is a subject of debate, but the blame must be assigned to all who tolerate callous bureaucracies and arise as an outraged public only when blood again stains the land.

The Hurricane Creek tragedy points directly to the either/or life choices an Appalachian must make. He may leave his home for the alien city or he may remain and face the uncertainty of dangerous jobs and frequent unemployment This is the kind of *de facto* freedom of choice so beloved by the Nixon Administration.

To make matters worse, in April of this year Frank Carlucci, OEO Director, defunded the Jackson-Clay County Community Action Group, a self-help program that offered, for a while, some hope for effective grassroots political action by poor people. Within a period of three months, the federal government showed that it was incapable of enforcing mine laws or standing up for the legitimate exercise of political rights by poor people. Flem Messer, executive director of the CAG, contends that the group's efforts to obtain benefits for miners' widows precipitated Carlucci's actions. Carlucci was aided, abetted and inspired by the Clay County Court House gang and Governor Louie Nunn. The mine disaster and the demolishing of the CAG, although they happened after *Our Land Too* went to press, lend more credibility to the picture Dunbar creates.

The impact of this account of life in the Delta and the hills is a cumulative one. Between the covers of one book there is a retelling of institutional and personal racism coupled with an account of the effects of the colonial practices of corporations. For cotton and coal, land has been bled, gouged and stripped. Nothing has been repaid to either the blacks or the mountaineers except the sops of bad public relations. The sharecroppers of the Delta were sold out with slavery. The miners and farmers of Appalachia were sold out to fuel an economy bent on giantism, pitiful but not helpless. *Our Land Too* is a reminder of America's capacity for evil. It is a reminder that what is out of sight is truly out of mind. Perhaps that is the best America can do. Dunbar asks if there is hope that poor whites and blacks *together* can overcome what greed, abetted by racism and complacency, has done to them. In my own mind, the fact that a 22-year-old southerner is the one who now urges us to reflect on this hope is equally as significant as the book itself.

The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories

CYNTHIA OZICK

Knopf, $6.95

ARTHUR A. COHEN

The seven stories in *The Pagan Rabbi,* Miss Ozick's first book since her remarkable novel *Trust* (1966), are of a piece, variegated but not different because energized by common obsessions. Miss Ozick breaks up familiar experiences and reconstructs them in such surprising ways that common passions—the wish to escape and transmogrify flesh, the exaltation of fantasy into a life-saving reality, the overlapping estrangement of Jew and Gentile (taking different cultural forms, but departing from the same quality of

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desperation) transcend towards new truths, revelations.

The short story is an excruciatingly demanding medium. One, at the most two, preoccupations can be handled within its compass. The gift of compressing and conducting obsession into single themes, allowing principal characters to be consumed by their idée fixe and retain credibility is exceptionally difficult. Most contemporary writers of short story strive for the beautiful mood, the language elegant and lovely and precise and one is left with a perfect sense of crushed flowers and mottled leaves, little definitions and small dreams. Or else, with the so-called "Jewish" writers, the reader receives sociologies rather than visions, for most Jewish writers use Jewish information like a duelist his poniard, good for little jabs and quick flight.

Cynthia Ozick comes forward in this masterful collection, not as a Jewish writer, but as a Jewish visionary—something more. All of her characters are, to begin with, distraught, distended by the world, trapped by misunderstanding, incommunicativeness, loneliness, exhaustion. But their distraction is only a starting-point. The stories are never simply descriptive or evocative. Isaac Kornfeld, the pagan rabbi, who surrenders to his lust for a mythological dryad he has conjured and in his passion to enforce upon her pure spirit the vividness of his flesh, loses her and in grief is hung (hangs himself) by his trailing prayer shawl. The great public scholar of the Law, husband of Sheindel who has survived the death camps, father of children, an upright and grave young scholar has pressed beyond the restricted order of the Jewish security system of girdles and fences and wandering free has found only madness and death. "The Dock Witch," another mythological extrusion, is the Gentile counterpoint to "The Pagan Rabbi," for the young shipping executive from Ohio, obsessed with the sea and the ships that bear people away from their flat worlds encounters an omnipresent sea nymph, aged, ageless Undine, who is all immediacy of flesh and sensational violence and through his love and terror loses all contact with ordinary days. One death, two transfigurations.

"Envy; or Yiddish in America," one of the funniest stories ever written—funny, mordant, miserable—chronicles the infinite frustrations and bitterness of a Yiddish writer who is dying with his language. Offsetting Edelshtein of "Envy" is "Virility," a story narrated by a desiccated *Wasp* journalist named Edmund Gate who is depredated by a greenhorn who pilfers his name (he is born Elia Gatoff from Glusk-, Russia, via Liverpool, to New York). Young Elia/Edmund insists upon becoming an English poet and despite no talent manages—and that is the mystery of the story—to become the most celebrated poet of his day, vaunted for his masculinity, his energy, his potency. Edelshtein collapses under the weight of his frustration before universal anti-Semitism and Edmund Gate, the bogus, is last seen by Edmund Gate, the real, masqueraded as a quasi-transvestite, his virility hopelessly compromised by the revelation that his masculine power was all copped from his old Jewish aunt who stayed behind in Liverpool.

Cynthia Ozick is always refining and winnowing obsessions and for the projection and substantiation of obsessions, thought is indispensable. A writer has to mind the language when obsession is at stake. It isn't enough to record the experience, because the experience is not given. It is wrested free from the encumbrance of normal perception and wrenched apart, examined like the entrails of a haruspex, and sewn up again differently. For this work all of the literature, philosophic, moral, mythological, and all of the language, its unfamiliar words and its delicious words have to be used. And Cynthia Ozick does all this, the language textured by a network of associations, reminiscences, allusions to the vast intellectual tradition of the West which has tried to crack the hard nut of thought with its bare teeth.

If the modalities and forms of her obsession shift there is a constancy in the recurring theme of reconciliation (or reconcilement as she calls it in "The Doctor's Wife" and "The Butterfly and the Traffic Light"). But reconciliation which entails mutual compassion and reconcilement which is the accommodation of self to societies and histories never comes off. All the stories end with a kind of bleakness and disturbing obduracy. Perhaps the only

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ARTHUR A. COHEN is completing a new novel, *The Mes-siah Is Uptown*, due next spring.

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one which suggests an ultimate nobility without a scream, the questing Rabbi Isaac Kornfeld in the title story, concludes in apotheosis. In all of Miss Ozick's stories there is the effort to call out over the horizon of human existence to the nameless one. The nameless one does not answer. He doesn't recognize his name. And we don't know the right one.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 443)

who ran the Moores out of Jenkintown? ("Why they ran us out of Jenkintown," by Marcena and Trevor Wyatt Moore, *Look Magazine*, Oct. 20, 1970, p. 98.) Unfortunately there seems to be bigotry enough to cover all social classes.

RICHARD MAYER

Foreign Capitalism

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Gary MacEoin's article: "Latin-America: Who Is to Blame?" [June 25] is a basic contribution to the understanding of the situation in Latin-America. It is however incomplete and what is left out is so important that the whole analysis becomes weak.

An analogy will illustrate what I have in mind. The U.S. is in deep trouble: financial, economic, spiritual, political, religious, you name it. Gary MacEoin would not blame foreign capitalism for our troubles. What is missing in his analysis is that the same forces that are responsible for the U.S. catastrophe, are also playing their game in Latin America. It is true that in Latin America these forces have allied themselves with foreign capitalism, but if foreign capitalism did not exist in Latin America these forces, down there, as here, would be working just as well for the enslavement of man. The military, and the traditional support given the military by the Catholic hierarchy, are two of the most powerful of these forces. There was certainly no appreciable American capitalistic influence in Argentina before 1930, and very little from 1930 to 1950. The military however have taken power and the country is in economic and political crisis ever since. The same kind of military expenditures that are crushing down the American people now, have been choking the Argentine people since 1930, with the differences that the U.S. is richer and more developed than Argentina, and what it may be to live without a luxury here, it is to live without bread for many people in Argentina.

The deficiency in the analysis of the author becomes clearer when consideration is given to the situation in countries that are no more subjected to American capitalism, or that are only little subjected to it: like Cuba, and now Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Nobody can state that Cuba is out of typical Latin American troubles. The Peruvian situation may have improved psychologically since their military have turned against American capitalism, but it has not changed economically for the better. It probably will not do so in the future. A good test of this thesis may be given by Chile, if Allende not only controls foreign capital, but throws out the generals as well.

As long as Latin American countries, or for that matter any country in the world, are crushed by military expenses, military influence, military mentality, nobody can, in fairness, blame only foreign capitalism for the economic disaster. The 20 different unworkable small countries in Latin America, frequently fighting against each other, have not been kept separated by American capitalism (although occasionally this capitalism contributes to and benefits from the holocaust). They have been kept separated by pride, nationalistic feelings, the church and the army. Unless the army is destroyed in Latin America, no human development will be possible.

MacEoin does not seem very familiar with Argentina nor with Mexico. Mexico is, of all the South American countries, the most progressive and the most successful, and moving forward against the greatest handicaps in the continent. But its army is relatively one of the smallest and better controlled.

A. J. DURELLI

Political Poetry

San Francisco, Cal.

To the Editors: I'd like to clarify a point about Denise Levertov's work in my article on political poetry [July 23]. I implied that she had ignored political subjects before *Relearning the Alphabet*. In fact, her "Life at War" (in *The Sorrow Dance*, 1967) had displayed an inner reckoning with the fact of the war in which the shock of recognition had been all the more shocking in its quiet lyricism. The breakthrough in *Relearning* is not that Levertov has broached political themes, but that she has moved toward integrating her political sensibility with her no-longer-quite-so-private life. She moves still further toward that synthesis with her forthcoming book, a continuation of the stunning "Notebook" poem of *Relearning*. I regret that the editors of *Commonweal* did not incorporate this clarification in the original text of my article, as I had proposed.

TODD GITLIN

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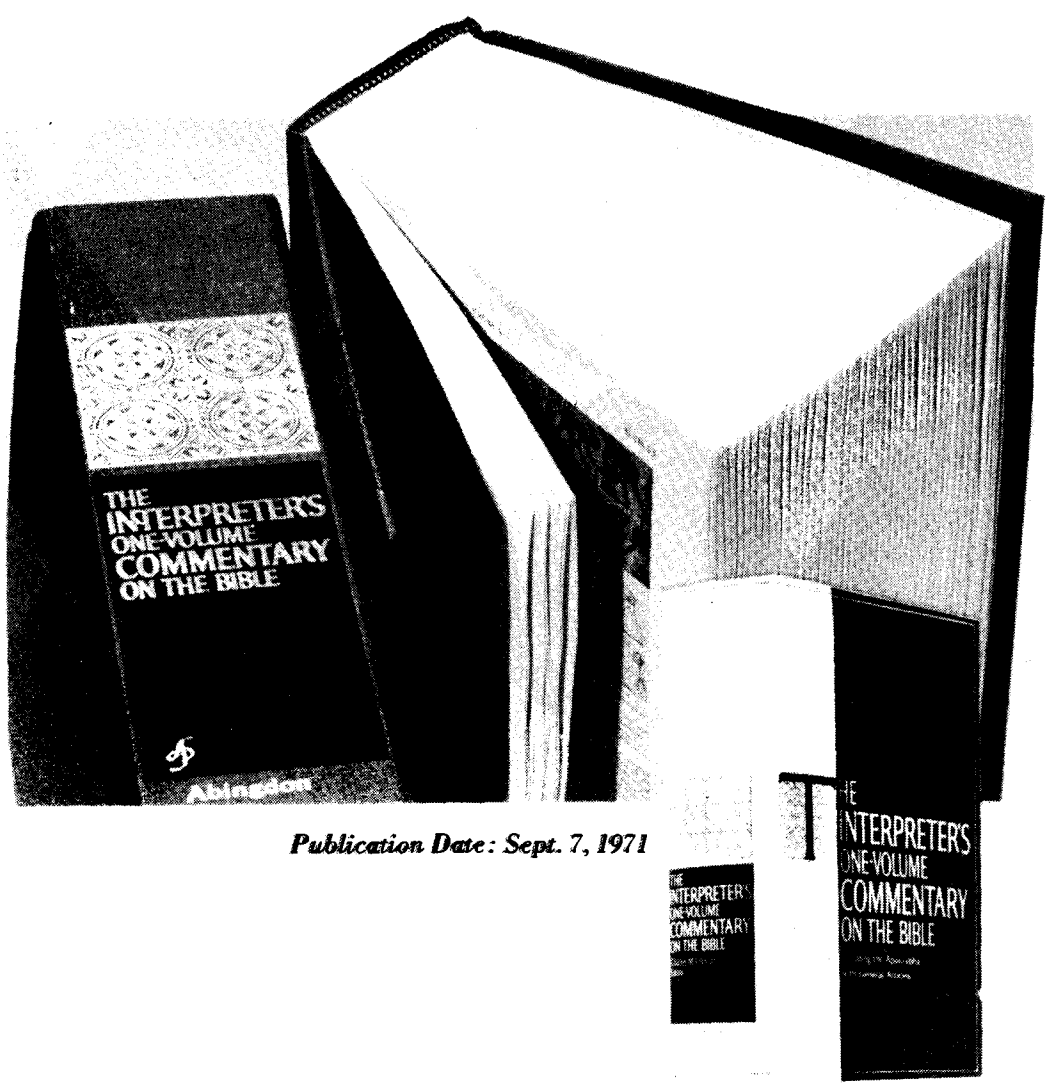

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